

Early Learning Council

Five “Big Ideas”

Presentation to the
Steering Committee

July 10, 2006

Background:

Early Learning Council's Dual Charge

- *Advisory committee* to Washington Learns—what should early learning look like within a globally competitive approach to education?
- *Council under HB 1152*—what tools and supports do parents, other caregivers and child care and early education programs need to prepare young children to succeed in school and in life?

Vision Statement

ELC proposes major shift in thinking about education

- From institutions to individual learners
- Research-based—brain development, psycho-social, economics
- “Learning to learn”—from birth through age ten
- Focus on mastery of basic skills & people skills
- Focus on accountability—children surrounded by people with specialized training and skills who do what it takes to help them achieve mastery

ELC Vision for 2016

- Washington State world-renowned for support of young children & families
- Research-based materials & supports for parents, other caregivers, and child care & early education programs
- Full-time, high-quality economically integrated early education & supports—affordable, holistic, culturally relevant, family centered
- Special needs recognized & responded to early
- By age four, children in voluntary taxpayer-supported, full-day, full-year early learning

1. Support Parents as their Child's First and Best Teachers

Description

Every parent will have access to culturally-competent, linguistically appropriate support to help their children “learn to learn.” This will include universal availability of parent education and more intensive supports for high-risk families.

1. Support Parents....

Examples of Possible Strategies

- Provide a continuum of family supports including intensive support for high-risk families.
- Provide transparent, readily available information about the child care licensing process & provider compliance.
- When parents choose family, friend & neighbor care for their child, make culturally relevant information & supports available to these providers.
- Create seamless connections between early intervention services, schools & other care and learning providers.

II. Refocus and Change Public Perception about Education for Children Birth through Age Ten

Description

The public and private sectors will provide leadership to foster increased understanding about the importance of the “learning to learn” years and the need to refocus and change the landscape of education.

II. Refocus and Change Public Perception....

Examples of Possible Strategies

- *Public Information Campaign*
- *Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)*—
 - upgrade the quality of child care & early education through clear expectations, supports & incentives
 - provide parents with information about the type and quality of programs
 - improve early learning outcomes & school readiness.

II. Refocus and Change Public Perception....

- *Regulatory Reform*—
 - parent involvement
 - rules research based
 - unannounced monitoring
 - liability insurance
 - institute preschool registration
 - increase consistency in practice
 - system of progressive enforcement
- *State-of-the Art Technology*—required to ensure accessibility, transparency, accountability, & demonstrated outcomes in early learning

III. Provide Fair, Sufficient and Stable Funding for Early Learning

Description:

A delivery system dependent largely on what parents can afford to pay results in early learning services and supports that lack the resources to provide high quality services—including adequate worker education, training & compensation.

III. Provide Fair, Sufficient & Stable Funding....

Examples of Possible Strategies

- *Encourage employers* to support high quality early learning through dependent care assistance plans & other strategies.
- Support *intensive family supports* such as Nurse-Family Partnerships and access to Head Start, ECEAP and other high quality early learning programs.
- Ensure that *existing programs* are adequately funded to provide high quality services, e.g., subsidy reimbursement rates, resource & referral, ECEAP funding.
- *Phase-in QRIS implementation* in an array of communities across the state in FY 07-09.
- Support K-12 recommendation to *phase-in full-day kindergarten*.

IV. Support Early Educator Professional Development, Compensation and Competency

Description

Quality in child care and early education is linked to the **quality of adult-child relationships**. Staff in the “learn to learn phase” of education need to be **culturally-competent and well-trained**. Staff compensation should be commensurate with other professionals with equivalent levels of education.

IV. Support Early Educator Professional Development....

Examples of Possible Strategies

- Address *provider/teacher preparation and certification*—certification for individuals working in early learning should be pursued.
- *Dramatic increases are needed in the capacity of higher education*—along with improved articulation between community-based training and two- and four-year early education programs.

V. Build Community-Level Capacity in Support of the “Learning to Learn” Years

Description

While planning and implementing strategies may differ across communities, leadership from the state and the private sector can serve as the catalyst for effective local partnerships and positive early learning outcomes for children. Public support and creative solutions will be maximized through local governance, seamlessness among programs, and development of financing partnerships.

V. Build Community-Level Capacity....

Examples of Possible Strategies

- Communities will be encouraged to plan for how they will support parents, other caregivers & learners during the first eleven years.
- Community plans will address the availability of high quality early education opportunities for four-year olds & strategies to extend community partnerships among child care & early education programs.
- Early QRIS implementation will include identification of communities that are interested & ready to serve as early implementers.